

## Karma and Its Effect in Buddhist Teachings (*Karma & Vipaka*)

Karma or action, that Buddhism explains, means whatever we do physically, verbally or mentally with a conscious mind. Karma, action always relates to its result (*Vipaka*). Every action which related to the mind with volitions has a reaction. Whatever seeds we sow, we will receive the same type of crops. Karma theory is also of this nature. Whatever we do with volitions in the present, its result (*Vipaka*) will comes to us in the future. In this situation if we are clever to succeed this moment with a pure mind, we can see the fruitful results in the next moment. That is why Buddhism advises us to keep mind always pure, calm and quite with generosity, loving kindness, compassion and wisdom.

The Buddha advised us to reflect the Karma and its results always as a man or woman, lay person or monk.

**'I am the owner of actions (Karma), the inheritor, the origin, the relation and refuge of actions. Whatever actions I perform whether good or evil, I will be their inheritor. This must be reflected upon again and again by one who has gone forth.'**

As much as we listen to what the Buddha taught, our wisdom gradually increases. The very first level of wisdom in Buddhism is the understanding of the Karmic Law (*Kamassakata Sammaditthi*). Here we are knowledgeable about the actions, volitions and its results. Whatever we do with intention, we will receive the same results. If someone does something physically, verbally or mentally, he or she receives the same results. If someone does something with impure mind, he will receive the evil results because of polluted mind. Also, if someone does something with pure mind, he will have the fruitful results. This is an eternal law which no one controls.

According to Karmic energy birth of beings is different. It says in the *Dhammapada*;

*Gabbhameke uppajjanti,  
nirayaṃ pāpakammino;  
Saggaṃ sugatino yanti,  
parinibbanti anāsavā. (Dhammapada-Papavagga)*

Some are born in the womb; the wicked are born in hell; the well-conducted go to blissful states; the stainless (undefiled ones) pass into Nibbana.

Buddhism points out the path how to overcome suffering and achieve ultimate happiness that no one can change. For the real happiness we have to understand three defilements which disturb out peace of mind. They are greed, anger and ignorance. Our real happiness as well as success depends on how far we have overcome these three defilements (negative thoughts) from our mind and how far we have developed positive thoughts like generosity, loving kindness and wisdom.

Karmic results come to us according to the nature of the action. Some results of Karma come in this life, and some come in future life according to its strength. This is a process of mind and body as well as the universal law. It occurs as a cause and effect theory. It is not god's will or any other power. It is not even the Buddha's creation. It is only a Buddhist explanation and discovery by the Buddha's intelligence. Buddhism points out very clearly whether a Buddha appeared or not, this reality is forever in the world. If we are intelligent, we are clever to get the benefits by practicing Karmic theory into the correct way wisely. Here, knowing of the Buddha's message for Karma is very important for our correct understanding.

One day a young person, Subha came to the Buddha and asked some questions. "Lord Buddha; There are many variations in the world. Some are unwise, some are wise, some are poor, some are rich, some are beautiful, some are ugly, some live long, some die early, some are in high cast, some are in low cast, some are healthy, some are unhealthy. Lord what is reason of these variations? Here the Buddha said that the reason of these differences is the Karma, and the Karma divides persons as high and low. The Buddha has explained here how Karma affects our life, and how important it is.

According to Buddhism, understanding of the karmic law (*Kammassakata Sammaditthi*) is very important on the path to liberation. Here we have a clear understanding about Karmic force. When we do something with a wicked mind, we will have the bad results because of the polluted mind. Similarly, if we do something with a pure mind, we will have the fruitful results because of the pure mind. If somebody has this understanding, he or she always tries to avoid bad deeds, tries to do good as much as he or she can. We avoid bad deeds and do good deeds not only for the

success of next birth but also for this life. With the understanding of Karmic law, we are able to know the main reason that propels (or forces) our entire life.

The Buddha explained two paths; the heavenly path and the path to liberation. First of all, the Buddha emphasized the importance of practicing good (or merits) that assures heavenly rebirths. The big challenge in front of us is the possibility of going to hell after death. Therefore the Buddha kindly pointed out how to overcome hell. We have to try to not to do evil and do good to get rid of hell. Why do we abstain from doing evil? Evil is a synonym for suffering. By doing evil we create suffering in our life. It disturbs our success. That is why we should try to overcome evil. Also, while doing good, we generate positive thoughts which bring happiness and success to our life. Practicing merit means generating happiness.

If we wish others discomfort and evil, as the results of these negative thoughts, same evil and discomfort come to us. On the other hand, when we always wish others' success and comfort, and do benevolence to others, the same results come to our life bringing happiness.

Although we see the results throughout our life according to karmic energy, it doesn't sound that we have a permanent soul or an everlasting mind. Buddhism explains that the Karma theory is also subject to impermanence. Our mind which controls our physical body always changes too. It has no permanent existence. Every thought arises and ceases at the moment with the conditions. When conditions are together, a thought arises. Also, when those conditions go away, the thought ceases. The especial thing is that the mind or a thought doesn't arise alone. If a thought arises, other four things are with it. If we have any experience through our senses, five aggregates arise together. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*-රූප), feelings (*Vedana*-වේදනා), perception (*Sanna*-සන්දේශ්‍ය), mental formations (*Sankhara*-සංඛාර) and mind (*Vinnana*-විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they cease when the conditions separate instantly. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight.

The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment ceasing, everything ceases without leaving anything remained. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future)**

**occurrence.** (අනුත්වා සම්භ්‍රතං නුත්වා න භවිස්සති). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illuminates.

According to Buddhism, we can see an action or karma, also we can see a reaction or result (Vipaka), but there is no certain person who undergoes. Every thought arises and ceases at the moment. However every thought ceases at the moment conditioning next thought which arises next moment. First thought influences to next thought, but first thought doesn't go to next thought. Our long sansaric journey as well as this entire life exists in this way. According to conventional truth in Buddhism, we have a very long sansaric process. Our previous actions, that we did very long time ago, can affect to this life. Nevertheless we have only thought which occurs at the moment according to ultimate truth. This is the nature of the impermanence that Buddhism analyzes. This is the wonder of our life whether we like or not. This is the surprise of the life whether we know or not. This is the world truth that nobody controls. This is a non-self Karmic process. There is only pure process depending on cause and effect (or the dependent origination).

There are four kinds of Karma.

- i. There are some Karmas that are black which consequence black results.
- ii. There are some Karmas that are white which consequence white results.
- iii. There are some Karmas that are black & white which consequence black & white results.
- iv. There are some Karmas that are neither black nor white which consequence neither black & white results.

The black or evil Karmas, which we do with a wicked mind physically, verbally or mentally, produce black results. According to black Karmas we are born in the four hells, and we suffer for a long time. The white or wholesome Karmas those we do with a pure mind as merit physically, verbally or mentally, consequence is white results. As the result of good karma or merit, we can live in the heavenly realm for a long time with luxurious comforts. Further, as the results of Karmas that are black & white which produce black & white results, we are born in human realm where we experience a mixture of good and bad results. After a person is enlightened, his Karmas are neither black nor white because it doesn't bring good or bad results. On the other hand, if a person does

some karmas which cause to end Sansaric existence, those are also Karmas which are neither black nor white. Buddhism always encourages us to do these kinds of actions.

At the very beginning, we have to overcome evil which brings us suffering. In the second step, we have to do good as generosity, virtue and meditation. Having a lot of merit as practicing good help us to live with a lot of facilities in human and heavenly realms. Conversely, Buddhism always encourages us to do the Karmas which cause us to overcome the Sansaric journey. Here we have to practice both the tranquility (*samatha*) and the insight (*vipassana*) meditation. The purpose of tranquility meditation is to keep focusing our mind in a particular wholesome thought such as breathing or loving kindness. When we practice our mind again and again using some kinds of meditation techniques, we can concentrate our mind for a long time without defilements such as desire or anger. As a result, we gain peace of mind and purification of mind that causes our happiness. With the concentrated mind, if we can focus on impermanence; arising and ceasing of five aggregates. This is the insight meditation which is unique only to Buddhism and it differs from that of all other religions and teachings. Both tranquility and insight meditations are very important for the purification of mind. If someone practices in accordance with this message, he or she is able to get rid of all kinds of pain, sorrow and lamentation.



May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

(සියලු සත්ත්වයෝ සුවපත් වෙත්වා!)

(Tuesday Dhamma Discussion of Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena. 11/22/2016)